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FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6775
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T ALGIERS 001329

NOFORN

DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA, S/CT, DS/ICI/CI, NEA/EX AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/16/2033

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [KMSG](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL SVBIED ATTACK AGAINST U.S. OR FRENCH
EMBASSIES IN ALGIERS

REF: A. TD-314/089151-08

[B](#). STATE 133222

Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce for reason 1.4 (g)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Algerian police have provided Embassy with specific and credible information concerning a possible imminent suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attack against the U.S. or French embassies in Algiers. The EAC convened twice on December 22 to review the information, police activities in response, and appropriate changes to Embassy security posture. As a result, the Embassy reconfigured its observance of the Christmas holiday to conform with Department guidance in ref B, and will consequently be closed for the holiday from December 23-26. The EAC will review the situation December 26 to determine if non-holiday closure to the public is warranted. The EAC concluded that no public announcement is appropriate at this time, and that the no-double-standard policy is being duly observed. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On December 22, DCM convened the Algiers EAC to review the Embassy's security profile in light of credible and specific threat information provided by host government law enforcement to RSO. Local police informed RSO the morning of December 22 that they had indications of a possible SVBIED attack against the U.S. or French embassies. Police said they were actively searching for a red Peugeot 205 bearing Algerian registration tags 14207-19016. RSO informed the EAC that, after receipt of the information, all entrances to the Embassy had been blocked with old fully-armored vehicles. Guards and PSU personnel were also instructed to put on their protective equipment and to be on the lookout for any suspicious-looking vehicles. The Embassy's principal vehicle entrance (Main CAC) was closed to vehicular traffic. In addition, spike strips and a blocking vehicle were placed at the rear service entrance to the Chancery. The EAC concurred that the security measures taken were appropriate in light of the information received, but agreed to reconvene later in the day following additional investigation by RSO.

POLICE BRIEFING/ACTIVITY

[1](#)3. (C) RSO met with local police at 1230 on December 22 to seek additional information regarding the threat and the police ability to counter and respond. Local police informed RSO that the threat was an AQIM plan they considered to be in the "execution" phase, and that their information was "100 percent reliable" and based on an inside source within the terrorist group. The attack plan allegedly includes the use of an SVBIED carrying a bomb of between 200 and 500 kg of "TNT" (Comment: Local authorities customarily refer to the car bombs used by AQIM as carrying TNT, though in fact most if not all use ammonium nitrate-based explosives. End Comment.) The police told RSO that two occupants, a male and

female, would be in the vehicle. The police stated they suspect the two occupants were being used to "trick" the police into thinking they were a family and thus more likely to pass through police checkpoints. Although they had a suspected license plate number, the police acknowledged the plate could be changed, and therefore checkpoints and other security elements were watching for any red Peugeot 205. Police further stated that the SVBIED originated from either Tizi Ouzou or Boumerdes provinces (both just east of Algiers). Police did not know if the SVBIED had already entered the city of Algiers or was even yet en route, but were actively searching for it in and around the city in a combined police/gendarmerie/military operation. RSO was informed that the increased security posture in the areas around the U.S. and French embassies would remain in effect until January 2 or until the threat was neutralized.

¶4. (C) Separately, RSO surveyed changes to the security presence in the larger area around the two embassies. The police presence around the Hydra neighborhood (site of the French embassy and west of the U.S. Embassy compound) had been increased significantly and police were observed stopping vehicles and interviewing passengers. In general, the police presence in the streets around the Embassy is the most extensive we have observed since just after the December 11, 2007 bombing of the UN and the Constitutional Court in Algiers. All existing police checkpoints have been augmented

and the police appear to be actively searching all vehicles.

SECOND EAC

¶5. (S/NF) The Ambassador chaired a follow-up EAC meeting the afternoon of December 22 to review the additional information obtained. RSO provided a summary of the police information. GRPO reported no additional information from liaison or other sources. The EAC took note of the fact that the threat information was specific to the U.S. and French embassies and did not involve other American interests. Given the ongoing police effort to interdict the suspected would-be bombers, the EAC agreed that it would be prudent to rearrange the upcoming holiday schedule to conform to Department guidance (ref B). Embassy had originally planned for operational reasons to observe the holiday December 24-27. The EAC agreed that the Embassy would instead observe the Christmas holiday from December 23-26. The EAC also agreed to reconvene on December 26 to review whether the threat information warrants closing to the public on Saturday, December 27.

¶6. (C) Since the threat information was specific to the Embassy, the EAC agreed that a warden message was not necessary or desirable (see below). The EAC also concluded that the no-double-standard policy was not violated by the decision to alter the holiday schedule. The Ambassador informed the Embassy community (USDH and LES) of the change and of the existence of threat information at a meeting that followed the EAC. The RSO also shared the essential threat information with colleagues at the French embassy during the course of the day.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: It is virtually unprecedented for the Algerian police to provide us threat information this specific and detailed. The fact that they took the initiative to do so is a major positive step in our cooperation and an additional impetus for us to take this threat information very seriously, especially in light of the aggressiveness of the police response. At the same time, the EAC is cognizant of the need not to compromise the information by unnecessary publication of the details of the threat or the police response to it. The altering of our holiday observance, in accordance with existing Department guidance, provides us with a four-day period of closure during which we hope the police can apprehend the would-be bombers. The EAC will keep the situation under close review, and will meet again not later than December 26. End Comment.

18. (U) Point of contact for this report is DRSO Miguel A.
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PEARCE